

Background

In November 2006, California voters passed Proposition 84, which included an allocation of \$54 million of bond funding for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC). In January 2007, the Governor proposed and the legislature approved \$17 million in grant funds for the SNC for Fiscal Year 2007-08. It is anticipated that the additional bond funds will be appropriated over the next two fiscal years.

At the July 2007 meeting, the Board approved final guidelines that define eligible project and grant types, grant size limits, availability of funds, selection criteria and how to apply for funding. The Board also approved a plan to allocate the grant funds as follows: \$9 million for a Competitive Grants Program and \$8 million for Strategic Opportunity Grants (SOGs). Of the \$8 million in SOG funding, \$1 million was allocated to each of the six SNC subregions and \$2 million for region-wide projects.

At the December, 2007 meeting the Board authorized 47 SOGs for a total of \$2,756,188. At the March 2008 meeting, the Board authorized 55 SOGs for a total of \$4,305,320. To date the Executive officer has authorized six grants for a total of \$188,495. Three grant requests were withdrawn by the applicants after the Board authorized them in December. Therefore, a total of \$789,997 remains available for SOGs.

Current Status

The available funds remaining in each of the subregion allocations as of May 21, 2008, are shown in the table below. Staff is recommending that an additional \$583,084 be re-allocated among four subregions, also shown below in Table 1.

Table 1 as of May 21, 2008

Subregion	Allocation	Total Authorized to date	Total Remaining As of May 21, 2008	Recommended Reallocation from Competitive
Region-Wide	\$2 Million	1,949,149	52,851	0
Central	\$1 Million	988,635	49,365	81,270
North	\$1 Million	952,204	47,796	18,404
North Central	\$1 Million	691,856	308,144	0
East	\$1 Million	824,895	175,105	320,999
South Central	\$1 Million	1,000,000	0	0
South	\$1 Million	843,264	156,736	162,411
TOTAL	\$8 Million	7,250,003	789,997	583,084

Project Development and Evaluation Process

The SNC Proposition 84 Grants Guidelines encourage potential applicants to consult with SNC staff prior to submitting applications. Many applicants have taken advantage of this consultation and report that it has been very helpful in developing their projects and applications. The consultations have also been beneficial for SNC staff by providing them with a better understanding of potential projects and increasing the likelihood that applications address the purpose of Proposition 84 and the mission of the SNC.

Immediately following the March 21 submittal deadline, staff began reviewing all applications for completeness and applicant eligibility. Upon determining that an application was complete and eligible for funding, the SNC provided local governments and water agencies with summaries of proposed projects, consistent with SNC guidelines. The subregional representatives on the SNC Board were also notified at this time, providing an opportunity for them to communicate with the affected entities as well and summaries of all eligible applications were posted on the SNC Web site. Staff is not aware of any outstanding issues with local governments on these projects.

SNC staff consulted with experts in a number of state agencies to review technical aspects of project proposals. Representatives from the Department of General Services (DGS) Environmental Services Branch and the office of the State Attorney General were consulted relative to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance.

For those projects found to be eligible, SNC staff evaluated project applications using the evaluation criteria contained in the Guidelines:

1. Contribution to the protection and restoration of rivers, lakes and streams, their watersheds and associated land, water, and other natural resources (Proposition 84);
2. How the project addresses one or more of the SNC program goals;
3. Demonstrated cooperation, community support and leveraging.

All applications were required to provide evidence of their ability to implement the project and meet environmental requirements. Through the course of the evaluation, staff interacted with applicants to gather additional information and resolve outstanding issues as necessary. Project proposals were reviewed with the Board's Subregional committees in mid-May regarding Subregional priorities and any issues or concerns related to specific projects.

Summary of Applications Reviewed

The SNC established March 21 as the last day an application could be submitted and still have the potential to be considered at the June Board meeting. The SNC received a total of 31 new applications by that date. Of these 27 were eligible. These were added to 17 eligible applications that were deferred from the first and second rounds of SOGs, for a total of 44 applications reviewed by staff. The total dollar amount requested for all projects in the third round of SOGs was \$2,642,188.

Following this round of authorizations, all remaining applications not funded will be considered inactive. Applicants may submit new applications for these or similar projects in future years and are urged to consult with SNC staff in order to improve the project application.

Projects Recommended for Funding

Exhibit A to this staff report includes both a spreadsheet showing project-specific information as well as individual project summaries for projects being recommended for Board approval at this meeting.

In some cases the recommended grant amount is less than the amount requested. This is primarily the result of some proposed expenditures being ineligible or elements of the projects needing additional refinement before being funded. In some cases, it may reflect a lack of available funds to fund the entire project.

Together, the recommended projects directly leverage more than \$1.1 million in additional funding and in-kind contributions being committed by applicants and others.

The recommended projects most strongly meet the evaluation criteria described above, are able to be implemented on a timely basis, and meet all environmental review and documentation requirements. The 20 projects recommended for funding in this round of Strategic Opportunity Grants will contribute to completion of due diligence work to acquire two conservation easements protecting 1,600 acres of working landscapes and implementation of 4 site improvement projects resulting in treatment of 1,962 acres of forested land for fire prevention, restoration of 25 acres of riparian habitat, and restoration of over 30 miles of wilderness trail to avoid adverse impacts. Other projects will complete environmental review for future projects, pre-project planning and natural resource education activities.

Table 2 Staff Recommendations

Subregion	Recommended Projects	Total Recommended	Total Remaining	Augmented w/ Competitive
Region-Wide	1	50,000	2,851	0
Central	1	130,635	0	81,270
North	3	66,200	0	18,404
North Central	5	308,144	0	0
East	6	496,104	0	320,999
South	4	319,127	0	162,411
South Central	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	20	1,370,230	2,851	583,084

Region-Wide Significance: \$50,000

One project is being recommended for funding with Region-wide significance. This project will complete restoration of over 30 miles of wilderness trail, and will provide educational opportunities for 32 youth volunteers each contributing three weeks of hard wilderness labor in three national forests and wilderness areas.

Central Subregion: \$130,635

One project is being recommended for funding in the Central Subregion. New applications were not received for the Central Subregion due to the small amount of funds remaining after the March board meeting. A project authorized in December was withdrawn before being encumbered, adding \$38,000 to available funds and bringing the total available amount in this Subregion to \$49,365. The Central Subregion received more applications than any other Subregion in previous rounds, so it was not difficult to select a worthy project for authorization for this final round. The project proposed for authorization would contribute to the completion of a comprehensive watershed plan in the Placerville area. This recommended authorization includes \$81,270 re-allocated from the Competitive grants allocation.

North Subregion: \$66,200

Three projects are being recommended for funding in the North Subregion. Projects will provide for completion of pre-acquisition activities for 1,600 acres of working landscape and support development of an environmental education program in Alturas focused on preservation of the Pit River. This recommended authorization includes \$18,404 re-allocated from the Competitive grants allocation.

North-Central Subregion: \$308,144

Five projects are being recommended for funding in the North-Central Subregion to complete hazardous fuels reduction work, develop a watershed management plan for the Almanor Basin, upgrade visitor education and youth outreach programs for a working fish hatchery, complete a trails master plan to reduce erosion impacts to the watershed, and coordinate efforts aimed at preserving the integrity of the Tuscan headwaters area covering 11 watersheds in Butte and Tehama counties.

East Subregion: \$496,104

Six projects are being recommended for funding in the East Subregion. Projects would provide environmental review for fuels treatment projects and implementing fuels treatment projects, preliminary coordination for development of an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan to identify and prioritize watershed related projects, and a planning effort to improve water and air quality in the Mammoth Lake Basin by assessing current circulation patterns and transportation modes, and reducing recreation impacts by assessing current recreation uses. These assessments will support low impact planning and design efforts in the Mammoth Lake Basin. This recommended authorization includes \$320,999 re-allocated from the Competitive grants allocation.

South Subregion: \$319,147

Four projects are being recommended for funding in the South Subregion. These include one project to reduce trash disposal and encourage recycling, and protect natural features along the Tule River. One project will produce an educational video focused on reducing impacts to river corridors and riparian areas for specific ethnic groups. Other projects will assist in coordination of developing an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan to identify and prioritize watershed related projects, and an effort to educate and unify partners to undertake a collaborative approach to restoring portions of the San Joaquin River. This recommended authorization includes \$162,411 re-allocated from the Competitive grants allocation.

Reporting of Executive Authorizations: \$33,750

The SNC received two applications requesting Executive Officer approval since the last Board meeting. Consistent with the SNC Board Resolution 2007-001 and the Proposition 84 Grants Guidelines, the project in Table 3 details authorized grant funding by the Executive Officer based on the time-sensitive nature of the project. The second EO request did not meet the urgency test for EO approval; but it is being recommended for Board authorization as part of the North Subregion recommendations described above.

Table 3 Executive Officer Authorizations

Project Name	Project #	Grantee	Description	Dollar Amount
Sierra Nevada Trails and Recreation Initiative	070344	Student Conservation Association	Complete recruitment, training, and hiring of crewleaders for the Summer 2008 SCA program.	\$33,750
TOTAL				\$33,750

California Environmental Quality Act Compliance

A total of 16 projects being recommended do not require California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation due to the nature of the activities being recommended and have been included in a memo prepared for the Conservancy Attachment B.

Two projects being recommended require the Conservancy to complete a Notice of Exemption and file with the State Clearinghouse. A Notice of Exemption has been prepared for each project and will be filed upon Board approval.

Two projects require the Conservancy to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration and an Initial Study / Negative Declaration and file a Notice of Determination (NOD) for each.

The SNC as a Responsible Agency in accordance with CEQA Guidelines is proposing to provide grant funding to the Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District (MLFPD) for the Old Mammoth Lakes and Mill City Fuels Reduction Project. MLFPD, the Lead Agency pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, prepared and circulated the Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Old Mammoth/Mill City Fuels Reduction Project (SCH #2008012093). The 30-day public review period closed on February 25, 2008 and two comment letters were received, one from the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and one from the Native American Heritage Commission. Per letter from the State Clearinghouse dated February 26, 2008, MLFPD complied with the review requirements for environmental documents, pursuant to CEQA. MLFPD approved the project and filed a Notice of Determination with the State Clearinghouse on March 12, 2008. SNC staff has reviewed the Mitigated Negative Declaration prepared and adopted by the MLFPD, which identifies and considers the work proposed in the Old Mammoth Lakes and Mill City Fuels Reduction Project (SNC 070346) and recommends that the Board make findings concurrent with the findings adopted by the MLFPD and direct staff to file a NOD with the State Clearinghouse.

SNC was the lead agency for the Mill City Fuels Reduction Project (SNC 070358) Initial Study and Negative Declaration (SCH#2008034005). The USFS revised the Mill City Fuels Reduction Project FONSI and EA in preparation of an Initial Study and Negative Declaration, pursuant to CEQA, and submitted it to the State Clearinghouse on behalf

of the SNC for a 30-day review period, which closed on April 16, 2008. USFS received one comment letter from the California Department of Fish and Game. Per a letter from the State Clearinghouse dated April 17, 2008, SNC and USFS complied with the review requirements for environmental documents, pursuant to CEQA. SNC will file a lead agency Notice of Determination for the Mill City Fuels Reduction Project if grant funding for the project is approved.

These environmental documents are on file at the offices of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy:

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that Board adopt the Old Mammoth/Mill City Fuels Reduction Project Mitigated Negative Declaration which identifies and considers the proposed actions in the Old Mammoth/Mill City Fuels Reduction Project and make finding concurrent with the findings adopted by the Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District and direct staff to file a Notice of Determination with the State Clearinghouse.

Staff further recommends that Board adopt the Mill City Fuels Reduction Project Initial Study and Negative Declaration which identifies and considers the proposed actions in the Mill City Fuels Reduction Project and make findings that The proposed project would not have a significant impact related to aesthetics, agricultural resources, cultural resources, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, and utilities and service systems. The proposed project would have a less-than-significant impact related to air quality, biological resources, geology and soils, noise, and transportation and traffic, and direct staff to file a Notice of Determination with the State Clearinghouse.

Staff further recommends the Board authorize Strategic Opportunity Grants listed in Agenda Item XIII Exhibit A, and further authorize staff to enter into all necessary agreements and file the appropriate CEQA documentation with the State Clearinghouse for all projects.

Sub-Region	Reference #	County	Project Title	Grantee Organization	Total	URL
Region-Wide	SNC 070275	Alpine, Fresno, Inyo	Sierra Nevada Trails and Recreation Initiative	Student Conservation Association	\$ 50,000	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070275final.pdf
Region-Wide Total					\$ 50,000	
North	SNC 070158	Modoc	Central Modoc River Center Capacity Building Project	Modoc River Center	\$ 23,500	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070158final.pdf
North	SNC 070353	Lassen	Hulsman Ranch Conservation Easement	Lassen Land and Trails Trust	\$ 35,000	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070353final.pdf
North	SNC 070356	Lassen	McClelland/Eagle Lake Ranch Appraisal	HoneyLake Valley Resource Conservation District	\$ 7,700	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070356final.pdf
North Total					\$ 66,200	
North Central	SNC 070201	Plumas	Developing a Working Landscapes Watershed Management Plan for the Almanor Basin	Sierra Institute for Community and Environment	\$ 92,329	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070201final.pdf
North Central	SNC 070298	Plumas	Feather River College Hatchery - Project Fish - Education and Tourism	Feather River College Hatchery	\$ 26,875	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070298final.pdf
North Central	SNC 070343	Plumas	Plumas County Trails Master Plan	Plumas Corporation and Trails for Plumas County	\$ 30,000	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070343final.pdf
North Central	SNC 070345	Plumas	Grizzly Creek Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project	Plumas County Fire Safe Council	\$ 12,300	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070345final.pdf
North Central	SNC 070354	Butte, Tehama	Tuscan Headwaters Project	Northern California Regional Land Trust (NCRLT)	\$ 146,640	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070354final.pdf
North Central Total					\$ 308,144	
Central	SNC 070125	El Dorado	Hangtown Creek Comprehensive Watershed Plan	City of Placerville	\$ 130,635	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070125final.pdf
Central Total					\$ 130,635	
South	SNC 070165	Fresno, Madera	Revive the San Joaquin, San Joaquin River Restoration Stewards Partnership Network	Revive the San Joaquin	\$ 69,769	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070165final.pdf
South	SNC 070347	Tulare	Tule River Site Improvement Project II	Community Services & Employment Training, Inc. (CSET)	\$ 149,428	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070347final.pdf
South	SNC 070364	Fresno, Kern, Tulare	Southern Sierra IRWMP Launch Project	Sequoia Riverlands Trust	\$ 49,950	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070364final.pdf
South	SNC 070365	Fresno, Kern, Madera, Tulare	C.A.R.E. Environmental Ethics in the Sierra Nevada Video	Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council	\$ 50,000	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070365final.pdf
South Total					\$ 319,147	
East	SNC 070305	Mono	Mammoth Lakes Basin Interagency Collaborative Planning	Town of Mammoth Lakes	\$ 196,000	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070305final.pdf
East	SNC 070346	Mono	Old Mammoth and Mill City Fuels Reduction Project	Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District	\$ 99,999	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070346final.pdf
East	SNC 070357	Mono	Eastern Sierra IRWMP Launch Project	California Trout	\$ 49,663	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070357final.pdf
East	SNC 070358	Mono	Mill City Fuels Reduction Project	Inyo National Forest, Mammoth Ranger District	\$ 99,999	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070358final.pdf
East	SNC 070366	Mono	Swauger Creek Shaded Fuelbreak and Habitat Improvement	US Forest Service, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest	\$ 25,000	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070366final.pdf
East	SNC 070367	Mono	Twin Lakes Drainage Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project	US Forest Service, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest	\$ 25,443	http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/docs/SNC070367final.pdf
East Total					\$ 496,104	
Grand Total					\$1,370,230	

**SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY
PROPOSITION 84 STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY GRANT APPLICATIONS
NOT SUBJECT TO THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)**

Introduction

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), a Conservancy within the Resources Agency of the State of California, initiates, encourages, and supports efforts that improve the environment, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada region, its communities, and the citizens of California. SNC jurisdiction includes all or portions of 22 counties in the mountains and foothills of the Sierra Nevada, and certain neighboring areas including the Mono Basin, Owens Valley, the Modoc Plateau and a part of the southern Cascade region including the Pit River watershed.

The SNC Strategic Plan states that it will:

- ▶ Support efforts that advance environmental preservation, and the economic and social well-being of Sierra residents in a complementary manner;
- ▶ Work in collaboration and cooperation with local governments and interested parties in carrying out the SNC mission;
- ▶ Make every effort to ensure that, over time, Conservancy funding and other efforts are spread equitably across each of the various subregions and among the program areas, with adequate allowance for the variability of costs associated with individual regions and types of projects; and
- ▶ Inform and educate all Californians as to the substantial benefits they enjoy from the Region and the importance of the environmental and economic well-being of the Region.

The statute creating the SNC (Public Resources Code 33300 et seq.) provides for seven specific program objectives:

- ▶ Provide increased opportunities for tourism and recreation;
- ▶ Protect, conserve, and restore the region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources;
- ▶ Aid in the preservation of working landscapes;
- ▶ Reduce the risk of natural disasters, such as wildfires;
- ▶ Protect and improve water and air quality;
- ▶ Assist the regional economy through the operation of the Conservancy's program;
- ▶ Undertake efforts to enhance public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public.

2007/2008 Grant Applications

One of the tools used by SNC to accomplish the seven program objectives is the issuance of grants. As part of SNC review of Strategic Opportunity Grant applications for fiscal year 2007/2008 funding, SNC considered whether or not the action to be funded by the grant is considered a "project" subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); whether or not the action would be exempt from CEQA; and if the action is not exempt from CEQA, what the appropriate CEQA documentation would be.

Notice of Exemption

Form D

To: ☒ Office of Planning and Research
PO Box 3044, 1400 Tenth Street, Room 212
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: (Public Agency) Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603
(Address)

☐ County Clerk
County of _____

Project Title: Sierra Nevada Trails and Recreation Initiative (SNC 070275)

Project Location – Specific:

Stanislaus National Forest, Inyo National Forest (Golden Trout Wilderness), Sierra National Forest (High Sierra Ranger District)

Project Location – City: NA Project Location – County: Fresno, Inyo, and Alpine

Description of Project:

The Student Conservation Association in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service is requesting \$50,000 from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Strategic Opportunity Grants Program to implement trail maintenance activities necessary to improve current trail conditions. Trail projects will affect more than 31 miles of wilderness trails and include trail enhancement; wilderness restoration, and erosion control. Projects also include removal of five campsites from sensitive areas and enhancing/rebuilding two stock exclusion fences to protect meadows and water quality. See attached description.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Student Conservation Association and the U.S. Forest Service

Exempt Status: (check one)

- ☐ Ministerial (Sec. 2180(b)(1); 15285);
☐ Declared Emergency (Sec 21080(b)(3); 15269(2));
☐ Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
☒ Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Section 15301, "Existing Facilities"
☐ Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project will consist of general trail maintenance and repair activities along existing trails and public recreation areas; no new facilities or facility expansions will occur. All maintenance activities will follow standard leave-no-trace practices. Improvements to trails and camping areas will enhance the existing trail system, protect surrounding sensitive habitats, reduce erosion into streams and stabilize soils. The project will not result in significant adverse impacts to special status species or cumulative environmental impacts and there are no hazardous materials at or around the project sites. See attached description.

Lead Agency:

Contact Person: Marji Feliz Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4679

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Signature _____ Date: _____ Title: Executive Officer

Jim Branham

☒ Signed by Lead Agency

☐ Signed by Applicant

Date Received for Filing at OPR: _____

January 2004

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Sections 15301

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Proposition 84 Strategic Opportunity Grant Application Number 070275
Sierra Nevada Trails and Recreation Initiative

Description of Activities

The Student Conservation Association in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service is requesting \$50,000 from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Strategic Opportunity Grants Program to implement trail maintenance activities necessary to improve current trail conditions. The following four maintenance and repair projects will be implemented:

Stanislaus National Forest. Summit Ranger District. Maintenance of County Line Trail from its trailhead to the boundary of the Summit Ranger District in the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness. Three miles of trail will be brushed and rocked. Perform heavy maintenance and erosion control on 1,000 feet of trail. Primary activities will consist of drainage repair, erosion control, rebuilding trail through an area of mud and rockslide. Primary benefits will be public access, soil stabilization, and water quality.

Inyo National Forest. Mammoth Ranger District. Trail maintenance, campsite clean up, and repair of livestock exclusion fences in the Golden Trout Wilderness. Remove brush and loose rocks from 25 miles of trail, install 10 water bars/drainage dips, and remove 5 campsites too close to creeks/lakes. Rebuild two stock exclusion fences to protect meadows and water quality at Horseshoe Meadows administrative site and at Casa Vieja Meadow in the Golden Trout Wilderness. The trail maintenance will take place on the Cottonwood Lakes Trail and Blackrock to Kern River Trail, also in the wilderness. The proposed clean-up of campsites will occur at Jordan Hot Springs.

Sierra National Forest. High Sierra Ranger District. Remove and rehabilitate 2.5 miles of the old Golden Trout Lake Trail to natural conditions and eliminate, over the long-term, any indication that a trail existed. Reduce erosion of soil into creek between the Piute Canyon Trail and the Golden Trout Lakes. The most severely degraded sections occur in alpine meadows, where the failure of water diversion structures has caused the trail to capture surface runoff and cut severe incisions into the meadows. This project will improve wilderness character, bring wilderness trails to standard, and address remedial actions called for in 2005 John Muir/Ansel Adams Record of Decision.

Sierra National Forest. High Sierra Ranger District. Repair and stabilize a section of the L Lake Trail that is deeply (3+ feet in some locations) incised and is currently causing significant erosion and associated resource damage. This section of trail is located between Elba Lake and the bottom of French Canyon and is approximately 0.75 miles in length. It climbs switchbacks through sand and talus slopes where trail structures have failed, causing the trail to become deeply rutted.

These projects involve three types of work activities, which fall within the following categories of actions that are excluded from environmental documentation by the Forest Service Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook (1909.15, Chapter 31.12):

- Section 3. Repair and maintenance of administrative sites
- Section 4. Repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries
- Section 5. Repair and maintenance of recreation sites and facilities

All trail work, campsite and stock activity will follow standard leave-no-trace practices. Maintaining trails protects trail resources and allows the public the opportunity to access and enjoy the backcountry in a manner that reduces environmental impacts from heavy human traffic. Implementation of the project will benefit recreational opportunities, water resources and soil productivity and condition.

Reasons Why the Project is Exempt

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a categorical exemption provides for an exemption from CEQA environmental documentation requirements for a class of projects determined not to have a significant effect on the environment. Categorical Exemptions are addressed in Article 19 of the CEQA Guidelines, where a list of 32 classes of projects has been identified. Projects falling within one of these classes of projects are generally exempt from the provisions of CEQA.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15301: Existing Facilities

The Sierra Nevada Trails and Recreation Initiative is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Class 1, which is defined as follows:

Class 1 consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination. The types of "existing facilities" itemized below are not intended to be all-inclusive of the types of projects which might fall within Class 1. The key consideration is whether the project involves negligible or no expansion of an existing use. Examples include but are not limited to:

...

(c) Existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities (this includes road grading for the purpose of public safety)

...

(h) Maintenance of existing landscaping, native growth, and water supply reservoirs (excluding the use of pesticides, as defined in Section 12753, Division 7, Chapter 2, Food and Agriculture Code);

...

The Sierra Nevada Trails and Recreation Initiative will consist of general trail maintenance and repair activities along existing trails and recreation areas located in Stanislaus National Forest, Inyo National Forest (Golden Trout Wilderness), Modoc National Forest, Sierra National Forest (High Sierra Ranger District), Sequoia National Forest (Kern River Ranger District), and Plumas National Forest. Trails will not be expanded, nor new trails constructed.

No Exceptions to a Categorical Exemption

Categorical exemptions represent activities that generally do not result in significant environmental impacts. However, there are six exceptions to categorical exemptions, defined in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. Generally, a categorical exemption does not apply if a project would occur in certain specified sensitive environments, would affect scenic resources within an official state scenic highway, or would be located on a designated hazardous waste site. In addition, a categorical exemption would not apply if the project causes substantial adverse changes in the significance of a historical resource or would be considered significant within the cumulative context. Table 1 identifies the exceptions from CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 and a brief discussion of why each exception does not apply to the Sierra Nevada Trails and Recreation Initiative.

<p style="text-align: center;">Table 1 Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)</p>	
Exception	Applicability
(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.	The Sierra National Forest projects are located within Yosemite toad habitat. However, proper resource protection/avoidance measures are built into these two projects; therefore, the projects will not significantly affect the physical environment, biological environment, human environment or wilderness character. The US Forest Service District Wildlife Biologist for each project has determined that the projects will have no effect on special status species. The US Forest Service District Fisheries Biologist for each of the four projects has determined that the projects will have no effect on special status aquatic species. The US Forest Service Botanist for each of the four projects has determined that the projects will have no effect on special status plants. The US Forest Service District Hydrologist for each of the four projects has determined that the projects will have no effect on hydrologic/soil resources. The US Forest Service District Heritage Resources Specialist for each project has determined that the proposed project will have no expected effect on heritage resources. These determinations are based in part on implementing project design measures, such as the US Forest Service District Fisheries Biologist's protection/avoidance measures for Yosemite toads, leave-no-trace practices, cleaning and decontaminating equipment, and avoidance of ground disturbing activities at all identified archaeological sites.

<p style="text-align: center;">Table 1 Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)</p>	
Exception	Applicability
	<p>Additionally, the repair and maintenance projects in the Stanislaus and Inyo National Forests also incorporate proper resource protection/avoidance measures; therefore, the projects will not significantly affect the physical environment, biological environment, human environment or wilderness character.</p> <p>Benefits to the watersheds will include improved soil stability, drainage controls and reduced sediment runoff, which will improve the quality of runoff draining into the local watersheds.</p>
(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.	Trail improvements will not adversely affect environmental resources and will not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to projects in the area. The activities will provide slope stabilization and improved drainage along trail sections resulting in beneficial effects related to reducing erosion and sedimentation, long-term protection of water quality.
(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.	<p>The Sierra Nevada Trails and Recreation Initiative will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p> <p>Aesthetics. Temporary disturbances to the visual quality of the site will occur during project construction. However, the general trail maintenance and repair activities will improve the visual quality along trails.</p> <p>Agriculture. The project will have no impact on agricultural resources.</p> <p>Air Quality. Maintenance/construction activities will be conducted by hand crews with hand tools. The project would create no mobile source air emissions. The maintenance activities will not conflict with or obstruct implementation of applicable air quality plans and will not violate any air quality standard or contribute to an existing or projected air quality violation.</p> <p>Biological Resources. See (a).</p> <p>Cultural Resources. See (f).</p> <p>Geology/Soils. The purpose of the project is to improve soil stability and drainage along trail systems. The trail maintenance will not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils.</p> <p>Hazards/Hazardous Materials. See (e).</p> <p>Hydrology/Water Quality. The maintenance/construction activities will include installation of water bars, which are natural drainage features, to better contain and treat storm water runoff. The project will stabilize eroding slopes along existing trails to prevent ongoing sedimentation into surrounding watersheds. Project activities will be surficial and will require limited ground disturbance; therefore, it is unlikely that groundwater will be encountered. In addition, the project will have no other effect on groundwater supplies or recharge. The US Forest Service District Hydrologist for the Sierra National Forest projects has determined that the projects will have no effect on hydrologic/soil resources.</p> <p>Noise. Temporary construction activities will generate noise. However, work would be done by hand crews using hand tools and would require minimal motorized equipment. Further, the projects are located in wilderness areas with limited sensitive receptors in</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Table 1 Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)</p>	
Exception	Applicability
	<p>the vicinity that could be impacted. The project will not cause significant noise effects.</p> <p>Transportation. The project will involve short term use of trucks needed for hauling equipment and work crews to the trails. The vehicles use required will not block traffic and no traffic delays will occur due to installation activities.</p> <p>Other CEQA Issues. The project will have no effect on land use, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, or utilities and service systems.</p>
(d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.	Project maintenance and repair activities will take place along trails within designated wilderness areas. Maintenance/construction activities will not result in the removal of, or damage to, major trees, rock outcroppings, historic buildings or other resources within the viewshed of a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. Additionally, the trail work will improve the visual quality along associated trail systems.
(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.	The trail maintenance locations are not located on toxic sites listed pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. The maintenance/construction will be implemented consistent with state and local environmental permitting requirements and will not require the use of hazardous substances.
(f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.	<p>The Sierra National Forest project sites have been surveyed for archaeological resources. The US Forest Service District Heritage Resources Specialist for these two projects has determined that the projects will have no expected effect on heritage resources. The determination is based in part on avoiding ground-disturbing activities at all archaeological sites.</p> <p>If any historic, cultural, or archeological resources are found during project activities, all project activities in the vicinity of the historic resource shall cease and the District Heritage Resources Specialist will be notified immediately. Therefore, the projects will not result in an adverse change in the significance of any archaeological or historical resource and will not disturb or destroy any human remains or paleontological resources.</p>

Potential Future Actions

By funding the Sierra Nevada Trails and Recreation Initiative, SNC does not approve, or commit to approving, any action that has potential to result in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. As defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(a), any other action that would potentially result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment and that would either (1) be directly undertaken by a public agency; (2) be undertaken by a person and supported in whole or in part through a public agency; or (3) that would involve the issuance of an entitlement from a public agency shall be considered a "project" and shall be subject to CEQA. In such cases, the public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving the project (the "lead agency" per CEQA Guidelines Section 15367) shall determine the appropriate CEQA documentation and shall ensure that such documentation is prepared.

The grant applications listed in Table 1, below, were determined to involve activities that are not considered a “project” subject to CEQA.

Table 1 Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 84 Strategic Opportunity Grant Applications Not Subject to CEQA					
Application Number	Project Name	Applicant	County	Activity	Determination
SNC 070125	Hangtown Creek Comprehensive Watershed Plan	City of Placerville	El Dorado	Watershed Management Plan Environmental Review	Completing a comprehensive Watershed Management Plan for Hangtown Creek and preparation of a CEQA document is not a project subject to CEQA.
SNC 070158	Central Modoc River Center Capacity Building	Central Modoc River Center	Modoc	Capacity Building Education Publication Events	Building capacity for educational programs, publications, and public events is not a project subject to CEQA.
SNC 070165	San Joaquin River Stewardship Partners Network	Revive the San Joaquin	Fresno Madera	Planning and Development Capacity Building Education Publication Events Monitoring	Establishment of the San Joaquin River Community Resource Information System, conservation planning, coordination with stewardship partners, and preparing a community outreach plan is not a project subject to CEQA.
SNC 070201	Working Landscape Watershed Management Plan - Almanor	Sierra Institute for Community and Environment	Plumas	Initial Development/ Watershed Management Plan	Developing a comprehensive Watershed Management Plan for Almanor Basin is not a project subject to CEQA.
SNC 070298	Feather River College Hatchery – Project Fish – Education and Tourism	Feather River College Hatchery	Plumas	Capacity Building Education	Developing a hatchery brochure, webpage, maps and coordination of events and advertising for education and tourism purposes are not project subject to CEQA.
SNC 070305	Mammoth Lakes Basin Interagency Collaborative Planning	Town of Mammoth Lakes	Mono	Planning and Development Capacity Building	Analysis of circulation and transportation; planning a heritage, wildlife, and water use interpretive program; and data collection and analysis of current recreation activity in the Mammoth Lakes Basin are not projects subject to CEQA.
SNC 070343	Plumas County Trails Master Plan	Plumas Corporation and Trails for Plumas County	Plumas	Planning and Development Education Research Equipment	Developing a Trails Master Plan is not a project subject to CEQA.

Table 1
Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 84 Strategic Opportunity Grant Applications
Not Subject to CEQA

Application Number	Project Name	Applicant	County	Activity	Determination
SNC 070347	Tule River Site Improvement Project II	Community Services & Employment Training, Inc.	Tulare	Litter Removal Education	Litter removal, graffiti mapping, and education are not projects subject to CEQA.
SNC 070353	Hulsman Ranch Conservation Easement	Lassen Land and Trails Trust	Lassen	Planning and Development Appraisal Monitoring	Negotiation, legal review, appraisal, title work, and creation of baseline documentation for a conservation easement are not projects subject to CEQA.
SNC 070354	Tuscan Headwaters Project	Northern California Regional Land Trust	Tehama Butte	Capacity Building Education Events	Collaboration and facilitation of watershed conservation projects is not a project subject to CEQA.
SNC 070356	McClelland/Eagle Lake Ranch Appraisal	Honey Lake Valley Resource Conservation District	Lassen	Appraisal	Appraisal service and development of an acquisition plan are not projects subject to CEQA.
SNC 070357	Eastern Sierra Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Launch Project	California Trout	Mono	Initial Project Planning Capacity Building	Project planning and capacity building are not projects subject to CEQA.
SNC 070364	Southern Sierra Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Launch Project	Sequoia Riverlands Trust	Kern Tulare Fresno	Planning and Development	Initial planning and development of an Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Launch Project is not a project subject to CEQA.
SNC 070365	C.A.R.E. Environmental Ethics in the Sierra Nevada Video	Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council	Madera Fresno Tulare Kern	Education	Developing a video for public outreach and education is not a project subject to CEQA.
SNC 070366	Swauger Creek Shaded Fuel Break and Habitat Improvement	U.S. Forest Service, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest	Mono	Planning and Development Environmental Review	Resource surveys and environmental review pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act is not a project subject to CEQA.
SNC 070367	Twin Lakes Drainage Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project	U.S. Forest Service	Mono	Planning and Development Environmental Review	Initial planning, development, and environmental review for a fuel reduction and habitat improvement plan are not projects subject to CEQA. (The action for which

Table 1
Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 84 Strategic Opportunity Grant Applications
Not Subject to CEQA

Application Number	Project Name	Applicant	County	Activity	Determination
					planning is being conducted, on-the-ground fuel reduction, is subject to CEQA and the required review will be carried out by the lead agency.)

Grant Application Activities Listed in Table 1 are Not “Projects” Subject to CEQA

CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(a) defines “project” as “the whole of an action, which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, and that is any of the following:

- (1) An activity directly undertaken by any public agency including but not limited to public works construction and related activities clearing or grading of land, improvements to existing public structures, enactment and amendment of zoning ordinances, and the adoption and amendment of local General Plans or elements thereof pursuant to Government Code Sections 65100-65700.
- (2) An activity undertaken by a person which is supported in whole or in part through public agency contracts, grants, subsidies, loans, or other forms of assistance from one or more public agencies.
- (3) An activity involving the issuance to a person of a lease, permit, license, certificate, or other entitlement for use by one or more public agencies.”

The activities proposed in the grant applications listed in Table 1 involve public outreach, educational programs/ trainings/ workshops, distribution of educational materials, appraisal services, litter removal, initial project planning, environmental review/ permits, and monitoring. Although SNC will provide public assistance in the form of a grant for the activities listed in Table 1, the proposed activities have no potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect change in the environment. Therefore, the activities proposed in the grant applications listed in Table 1 are not “projects” subject to CEQA.

CEQA Does Not Apply to Table 1 Grant Application Activities

Per CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), a project is exempt from CEQA if “the activity is covered by the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.” As described above, the activities proposed in the grant applications listed in Table 1 have no potential for causing a significant effect on the environment and are not subject to CEQA.

Potential Future Actions

By funding the grants listed in Table 1, SNC does not authorize, or commit to authorizing, any action that has potential to result in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. As defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(a), described above, any other action that would potentially result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the

environment and that would either (1) be directly undertaken by a public agency; (2) be undertaken by a person and supported in whole or in part through a public agency; or (3) that would involve the issuance of an entitlement from a public agency shall be considered a “project” and shall be subject to CEQA. In such cases, the public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving the project (the “lead agency” per CEQA Guidelines Section 15367) shall determine the appropriate CEQA documentation and shall ensure that such documentation is prepared.

NOTICE OF DETERMINATION

To: Office of Planning and Research
State Clearinghouse
P.O. Box 3044, 1400 Tenth Street, Room 212
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

Subject: **FILING OF NOTICE OF DETERMINATION IN COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 21108 OR 21152 OF THE PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE**

State Clearinghouse Number: SCH# 2008034005

Project Title: Mill City Fuels Reduction Project (SNC 070358)

Project Location: National Forest lands (Old Mammoth and Mill City), Mono County, California
(south ½ section 4, north ½ section 9, and northwest ¼ section 10; T.4S., R.27E., MDB&M)

Project Description: Conduct fuels reduction treatments on approximately 125 acres of National Forest system lands, including understory thinning and mastication of trees and brush, piling of project-generated slash and dead and down woody material, and biomass disposal through on-site pile burning, chipping, hauling the material off-site, or through the sale of fuel wood.

As ☒ Lead Agency ☐ a Responsible Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Sierra Nevada Conservancy approved the above-described project on June 5, 2008 and has made the following determinations:

1. The project ☐ will ☒ will not have a significant effect on the environment.
2. A ☒ Negative Declaration ☐ Mitigated Negative Declaration ☐ Environmental Impact Report was prepared for this project pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.
3. Mitigation measures ☐ were ☒ were not made a condition of project approval.
4. A mitigation reporting or monitoring plan ☐ was ☒ was not adopted for this project.
5. A Statement of Overriding Considerations ☐ was ☒ was not adopted for this project.
6. Findings ☒ were ☐ were not made pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.

This is to certify that the final environmental document, comments and responses, and the record of project approval are available to the public at the following location:

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

Jim Branham

Executive Officer

(530) 823-4670
Phone #

TO BE COMPLETED BY OPR ONLY

Date Received For Filing and Posting at OPR:

NOTICE OF DETERMINATION

To: Office of Planning and Research
State Clearinghouse
P.O. Box 3044, 1400 Tenth Street, Room 212
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

Subject: **FILING OF NOTICE OF DETERMINATION IN COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 21108 OR 21152 OF THE PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE**

State Clearinghouse No.: SCH# 2008012093

Project Title: Old Mammoth and Mill City Fuel Reduction Project (SNC 070346)

Project Location: Mammoth Lakes, Mono County, California

Project Description: The Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District (MLFPD) proposes to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire by improving fire resiliency through vegetation treatments on 15 acres within the community of Mammoth Lakes. MLFPD would perform fuels reduction and removal on one town-owned parcel (Bell-shaped parcel), located southwest of the Meridian Boulevard and Minaret Road intersection. Additionally, MLFPD would perform site inspections and provide guidance to private property owners (over 800 parcels), and would assist property owners with slash disposal through providing chipping and disposal services (but would not perform tree or fuels removal on such parcels).

The project is a cooperative effort between MLFPD, Inyo National Forest, Mammoth Lakes Community Water District, Mono County, Town of Mammoth Lakes, Mammoth Lakes Trails-Public Access and University of California, Santa Barbara Valentine Reserve and is associated with a larger effort to perform fuels reduction treatments on approximately 125 acres of National Forest lands that are adjacent to private property. The proposed fuels reduction activities on federal lands owned by the United States Forest Service are being reviewed under separate NEPA and CEQA documents.

As ☐ Lead Agency ☒ a Responsible Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Sierra Nevada Conservancy approved the above-described project on **June 5**, 2008 and has made the following determinations:

1. The project ☐ will ☒ will not have a significant effect on the environment.
2. A ☐ Negative Declaration ☒ Mitigated Negative Declaration ☐ Environmental Impact Report was prepared for this project pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.
3. Mitigation measures ☒ were ☐ were not made a condition of project approval.
4. A mitigation reporting or monitoring plan ☒ was ☐ was not adopted for this project.
5. A Statement of Overriding Considerations ☐ was ☒ was not adopted for this project.
6. Findings ☒ were ☐ were not made pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.

This is to certify that the final environmental document, comments and responses, and the record of project approval are available to the public at the following location:

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

Jim Branham

Executive Officer

(530) 823-4670
Phone #

TO BE COMPLETED BY OPR ONLY

Date Received For Filing and Posting at OPR:

above, the proposed fuels reduction activities on federal lands owned by the USFS are being reviewed under separate NEPA and CEQA documents.

IMPACT MINIMIZATION MEASURES INCORPORATED INTO THE PROJECT

- ▶ The Town of Mammoth Lakes requires a tree removal permit to remove any tree larger than 6 inches diameter breast height (dbh) from any private property. The Town and MLFPD will work together to monitor proposed trees for removal and ensure compliance with the tree removal policy.
- ▶ The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection *General Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space*, February 8, 2006, will be employed as a primary framework for proposed practices for fuel reduction activities undertaken by the MLFPD.
- ▶ Fuels reduction work will be restricted in the vicinity of wetland areas in order to avoid directly impacting the riparian corridor of Mammoth Creek and the wetland areas located on the town-owned bell-shaped parcel. Restrictions include prohibition of the use of mechanical equipment within 75 feet of the edge of the mapped wetland area, and allowing only limited vegetation removal using hand tools within 50 feet of the wetland areas.
- ▶ The MLFPD will schedule chipping services by neighborhood in order to minimize the total vehicle miles traveled (VMT) associated with equipment movement.
- ▶ Vegetation removal activities will employ best management practices (BMPs) to minimize erosion. Chipped material will be spread on exposed soils and excess material will be made available to private property owners for use as ground cover.
- ▶ MLFPD will require fire precautions and control measures to be undertaken, including presence of on-site fire extinguishers and shovels, prohibition on smoking or lunch fires, and spark arresters and mufflers on equipment.
- ▶ Prior to beginning any vegetation removal work in the bell-shaped parcel, a survey shall be undertaken by a qualified biologist to determine the possible presence of any special status species. Should the potential occurrence of any such species be identified, the biologist shall specify procedures to avoid or minimize potential disturbance or impacts to those species. Such procedures shall be consistent with standard protocols developed and approved by the California Department of Fish and Game and/or US Fish and Wildlife Service. Such procedures shall be followed by MLFPD personnel or contractors in performing fuels reduction activities. **(Mitigation Measure Bio-1)**

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Quality |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biological Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Geology / Soils |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hazards & Hazardous Materials | <input type="checkbox"/> Hydrology / Water Quality | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Use / Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Noise | <input type="checkbox"/> Population / Housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation / Traffic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities / Service Systems | <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Findings of Significance | <input type="checkbox"/> None With Mitigation |

PREVIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), as a Responsible Agency in accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15096, is proposing to provide grant funding to the Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District (MLFPD) for the Old Mammoth Lakes and Mill City Fuels Reduction Project. MLFPD, the Lead Agency pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15050 to 15053, prepared and circulated the *Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Old Mammoth/Mill City Fuels Reduction Project* (SCH #2008012093). The 30-day public review period closed on February 25, 2008 and two comment letters were received, one from the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and one from the Native American Heritage Commission. Per letter from the State Clearinghouse dated February 26, 2008, MLFPD complied with the review requirements for environmental documents, pursuant to CEQA. MLFPD approved the project and filed a Notice of Determination with the State Clearinghouse on March 12, 2008.

The Old Mammoth Lakes and Mill City Fuels Reduction Project is associated with a larger effort to perform fuels reduction treatments on approximately 125 acres of land owned by the United States Forest Service (USFS) that are adjacent to private property. The proposed fuels reduction on federal lands was the subject of environmental review in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and CEQA. USFS was the NEPA lead agency for the *Mill City Fuels Reduction Project Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Environmental Assessment (EA)*. The Mills City Fuels Reduction Project completed public scoping and review periods from October 2007 through February 2008. The final 30-day objection period on the FONSI and EA closed on February 21, 2008. No objections were filed, and the FONSI was signed on February 28, 2008.

SNC was the lead agency for the *Mill City Fuels Reduction Project Initial Study and Negative Declaration* (SCH #2008034005). The USFS revised the *Mill City Fuels Reduction Project FONSI and EA* in preparation of an Initial Study and Negative Declaration, pursuant to CEQA, and submitted it to the State Clearinghouse on behalf of SNC for a 30-day review period, which closed on April 16, 2008. USFS received one comment letter from the California Department of Fish and Game. Per letter from the State Clearinghouse dated April 17, 2008, SNC and USFS complied with the review requirements for environmental documents, pursuant to CEQA. SNC will file a lead agency Notice of Determination for the Mill City Fuels Reduction Project if it approves grant funding for the project.

These environmental documents are on file at the offices of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy:

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

The Old Mammoth Lakes and Mill City Fuels Reduction Project is an effort to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire by improving fire resiliency through vegetation treatments within the community of Mammoth Lakes. MLFPD would perform fuels reduction and removal on one town-owned parcel (bell-shaped parcel), located southwest of the Meridian Boulevard and Minaret Road intersection. Additionally, MLFPD would perform site inspections and provide guidance to private property owners (over 800 parcels), and would assist property owners with slash disposal through providing chipping and disposal services (but would not perform tree or fuels removal on such parcels). All tree removal would be subject to review and approval of a tree removal permit in accordance with the Town of Mammoth Lakes regulations. The California Department of Forestry guidelines would be employed as a primary framework for proposed practices for fuel reduction activities undertaken by the MLFPD.

The project is a cooperative effort between MLFPD, Inyo National Forest, Mammoth Lakes Community Water District, Mono County, Town of Mammoth Lakes, Mammoth Lakes Trails-Public Access and University of California, Santa Barbara Valentine Reserve and is associated with a larger effort to perform fuels reduction treatments on approximately 125 acres of National Forest lands that are adjacent to private property. As described

RESPONSIBLE AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

PROJECT INFORMATION	
1. Project Title:	Old Mammoth Lakes and Mill City Fuels Reduction Project (SNC 070346)
2. Responsible Agency Name and Address:	Sierra Nevada Conservancy 11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205 Auburn, CA 95603
3. Contact Person and Phone Number:	Marji Feliz, Grant Administrator (530) 823-4679
4. Project Location:	Town of Mammoth Lakes, Mono County, California
5. Project Sponsor's Name and Address:	Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District P.O. Box 5 Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
6. General Plan Designation:	Land within the Town of Mammoth Lakes is residential, public use and ecological preserve.
7. Zoning:	Land within the Town of Mammoth Lakes is residential, public use and ecological preserve.
8. Description of Project:	<p>The Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District (MLFPD) proposes to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire by improving fire resiliency through vegetation treatments on 15 acres within the community of Mammoth Lakes. MLFPD would perform fuels reduction and removal on one town-owned parcel (bell-shaped parcel), located southwest of the Meridian Boulevard and Minaret Road intersection. Additionally, MLFPD would perform site inspections and provide guidance to private property owners (over 800 parcels), and would assist property owners with slash disposal through providing chipping and disposal services (but would not perform tree or fuels removal on such parcels).</p> <p>The project is a cooperative effort between MLFPD, Inyo National Forest, Mammoth Lakes Community Water District, Mono County, Town of Mammoth Lakes, Mammoth Lakes Trails-Public Access and University of California, Santa Barbara Valentine Reserve and is associated with a larger effort to perform fuels reduction treatments on approximately 125 acres of National Forest lands that are adjacent to private property. The proposed fuels reduction activities on federal lands owned by the United States Forest Service (USFS) are being reviewed under separate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents.</p>
9. Surrounding Land Uses and Setting:	Within the approximately 15 acres of land affected by the proposed project within the Town of Mammoth Lakes, land is comprised of privately owned property (over 800 parcels), one parcel owned by the Town of Mammoth Lakes, and an ecological preserve owned and operated by the University of California, Santa Barbara Valentine Preserve.
10. Other public agencies whose approval is required:	MLFPD, Town of Mammoth Lakes (tree removal permit), Inyo National Forest, Mammoth Lakes Community Water District, Mono County, Mammoth Lakes Trails-Public Access and University of California, Santa Barbara Valentine Preserve.

DETERMINATION (To be completed by the Responsible Agency)

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

I find that the proposed project **COULD NOT** have a significant effect on the environment, and a **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared. ☐

I find that although the proposed project **COULD** have a significant effect on the environment, there **WILL NOT** be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A **MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION** has been prepared. ☒

I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a significant effect on the environment, and an **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required. ☐

I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a “potentially significant impact” or “potentially significant unless mitigated” impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed. ☐

I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier **EIR** or **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier **EIR** or **NEGATIVE DECLARATION**, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required. ☐

Signature

Date

Jim Branham

Executive Officer

Printed Name

Title

Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Responsible Agency

Notice of Exemption

Form D

To: ☒ Office of Planning and Research
PO Box 3044, 1400 Tenth Street, Room 212
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: (Public Agency) Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603
(Address)

☐ County Clerk
County of _____

Project Title: Grizzly Creek Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project (SNC 070345)

Project Location – Specific:
2780 Grizzly Creek Road, Portola, CA 96122

Project Location – City: Portola

Project Location – County: Plumas

Description of Project:

The Plumas County Fire Safe Council (PC FSC) is requesting \$12,300 from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Strategic Opportunity Grants Program to finish hazardous fuels removal/treatment on 10 acres in the community of Portola as part of a larger 97-acre fuels treatment project, which has exceeded cost projections. PC FSC has completed fuels removal on 87 acres and for the remaining 10 acres, they have signed landowner agreements, defined treatment methods, a Timber Harvest Exemption, and a NEPA decision. See attached description.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Plumas County Fire Safe Council

Exempt Status: (check one)

- ☐ Ministerial (Sec. 2180(b)(1); 15285);
☐ Declared Emergency (Sec 21080(b)(3); 15269(2));
☐ Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
☒ Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Section 15304, "Minor Alterations to Land"
☐ Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project would involve minor disturbances to land and vegetation to remove accumulated fire fuels. The proposed vegetation management and fuel reduction activities are not expected to generate any significant environmental effects. The project will reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire. See attached description.

Lead Agency:

Contact Person: Marji Feliz Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4679

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Signature _____ Date: _____ Title: Executive Officer
Jim Branham

- ☒ Signed by Lead Agency
☐ Signed by Applicant

Date Received for Filing at OPR: _____

January 2004

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15304

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Proposition 84 Strategic Opportunity Grant Application Number 070345
Grizzly Creek Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project

Description of Activities

The Plumas County Fire Safe Council is requesting \$12,300 from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's (SNC) Strategic Opportunity Grants Program to finish hazardous fuels removal/treatment on 10 acres in the community of Portola as part of a larger 97-acre fuels treatment project, which has exceeded initial cost projections. Portola is located in Plumas County, east of Highway 89 along Highway 70 in the northern California Sierra Nevada foothills.

To date, the following actions have been completed on the project:

- 1) Obtained a Registered Professional Forester who completed the Timber Harvest Exemption and the NEPA decision;
- 2) Completed landowner agreements specifying that any revenue from merchantable timber products removed from the properties will be used for the projects and that landowners commit to maintaining their properties in a fire resilient condition;
- 3) Completed fuels treatments on 87 acres, treating surface, ladder, and canopy fuels to create a fire resilient condition, with projected flame length of less than 4 feet; and
- 4) Project monitoring, including photo points and projections.

As with the completed portion of the project, fuels reduction techniques will involve retaining dominant and co-dominant trees of the best phenotype (i.e., healthy crown, straight bole, no deformities); targeting intermediate and suppressed trees and those co-dominants that are the cause of overcrowding; and sanitation/salvage requirements, targeting dead, dying and/or diseased trees. Treatments will be implemented by hand crews and mechanical methods and removed timber materials will be chipped, piled and burned, or sold if they are merchantable timber products. The project compliments Hazardous Fuel Reduction efforts on public lands being treated under the Herger Feinstein Quincy Library Forest Recovery Act, private industrial lands, and other non-commercial private lands in the County. The project will reduce the risk of catastrophic fire.

Reasons Why the Project is Exempt

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a categorical exemption provides for an exemption from CEQA environmental documentation requirements for a class of projects determined not to have a significant effect on the environment. Categorical Exemptions are addressed in Article 19 of the CEQA Guidelines, where a list of 32 classes of projects has been identified. Projects falling within one of these classes of projects are generally exempt from the provisions of CEQA.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15304: Minor Alterations to Land

The Grizzly Creek Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, Class 4, which is defined as follows:

Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation, which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes.

...

(d) Minor alterations in land, water, and vegetation on existing officially designated wildlife management areas or fish production facilities which result in improvement of habitat for fish and wildlife resources or greater fish production.

...

(f) Fuel management activities within 30 feet of structures to reduce the volume of flammable vegetation, provided that the activities will not result in the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species or significant erosion and sedimentation of surface waters. This exemption shall apply to fuel management activities within 100 feet of a structure if

the public agency having fire protection responsibility for the area has determined that 100 feet of fuel clearance is required due to extra hazardous fire conditions.

...

The project will involve minor disturbances to land and vegetation to remove accumulated fire fuels. The proposed vegetation management and fuel reduction activities are not expected to generate any significant environmental effects. The project will reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire.

No Exceptions to a Categorical Exemption

Categorical exemptions represent activities that generally do not result in significant environmental impacts. However, there are six exceptions to categorical exemptions, defined in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. Generally, a categorical exemption does not apply if a project would occur in certain specified sensitive environments, would affect scenic resources within an official state scenic highway, or would be located on a designated hazardous waste site. In addition, a categorical exemption would not apply if the project causes substantial adverse changes in the significance of a historical resource or would be considered significant within the cumulative context. Table 1 identifies the exceptions from CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 and a brief discussion of why each exception does not apply to the Grizzly Creek Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project.

<p align="center">Table 1 Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)</p>	
Exception	Applicability
(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.	A Registered Professional forester has completed environmental review for the proposed fuels management project. A Timber Harvest Plan Exemption (Exemption No. 2-07EX-587-PLU) and a NEPA decision have been prepared and approved. The environmental review determined that no federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat are present; no flood plains or wetlands are present; no congressionally designated areas are present; no roadless areas are present; and archaeological sites or historic resources identified in the area have been flagged-off and eliminated from any treatment. Best management practices will be utilized to minimize erosion or other potential impacts. The project will reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire and restore balance to the area's natural habitat.
(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.	The fuel removal activities will not adversely affect environmental resources and will therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other fuels reduction work in the area.
(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.	<p>The project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p> <p>Aesthetics. The presence of workers and equipment during fuel clearing work will be temporary. The project will result in a minor change in the appearance of the existing forest surrounding residential areas in the Portola community due to a more open understory. However, the intent of the project is to restore the forest to a more natural condition.</p> <p>Agriculture. The project will have no impact on agricultural resources.</p> <p>Air Quality. Disposal of vegetative materials will be completed using chipping and burning, and the project may temporarily affect air quality due to burn piles. According to existing Timber Harvest Exemption, burning operations shall be completed by April 1 of the year following surface fuel creation. The activities will be short term in nature and will not cause significant air quality effects.</p>

Table 1
Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)

Exception	Applicability
	<p>Biological Resources. See (a). Cultural Resources. See (f). Geology/Soils. The thinning activities will not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils. Hazards/Hazardous Materials. See (e). Hydrology/Water Quality. The removal of fuels will work to protect water quality by reducing the risk of erosion associated with fire. Best management practices will be employed to prevent soil erosion. The project will have no impact on groundwater supplies or recharge. Noise. The project will generate noise during fuel removal; however, this will be a temporary condition and will occur during normal working hours, the least sensitive hours of the day. Therefore, the project will not cause significant noise effects. Transportation. The project will involve short term use of trucks needed for hauling thinning equipment, work crews, and chipping fuels. The project will generate a minimal, temporary effect on local transportation. Other CEQA Issues. The project will have no effect on land use, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, or utilities and service systems.</p>
(d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.	The project area is not located in along an eligible state scenic highway; it will not adversely impact scenic resources within a state scenic highway.
(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.	The project is not located on toxic sites listed pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. In addition, the restoration will not involve the storage, transport, or use of hazardous materials.
(f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.	The archaeological sites or historic resources identified in the area have been flagged-off and eliminated from any treatment. If any additional cultural resources are discovered during fuel clearing activities, work in the area shall be stopped and a certified archaeologist shall be consulted before work may continue. This will ensure that the project avoids any significant effects to cultural resources.

State of California
Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Final Negative Declaration

State Clearinghouse Number:

#2008034005

Project Title:

Mill City Fuels Reduction Project

Lead Agency:

Sierra Nevada Conservancy (in partnership with the US Forest Service, Inyo National Forest)

Project Description:

Conduct fuels reduction treatments on approximately 125 acres of National Forest system lands, including understory thinning and mastication of trees and brush, piling of project-generated slash and dead and down woody material, and biomass disposal through on-site pile burning, chipping, hauling the material off-site, or through the sale of fuel wood.

Project Location:

National Forest lands (Old Mammoth and Mill City), Mono County, California
(south ½ section 4, north ½ section 9, and northwest ¼ section 10; T.4S., R.27E., MDB&M)

History of Environmental Documents:

The proposed Mills City Fuels Reduction Project, proposed by the Inyo National Forest and located on federal lands, was the subject of environmental review in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). US Forest Service (USFS), Inyo National Forest, was the NEPA lead agency for the Mill City Fuels Reduction Project Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment. The Mills City Fuels Reduction Project completed NEPA public scoping and review periods from October 2007 through February 2008. The final 30-day objection period on the Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment closed on February 21, 2008. No objections were filed, and the Finding of No Significant Impact was signed by USFS on February 28, 2008.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) was the lead agency for the Mill City Fuels Reduction Project Initial Study and Negative Declaration (SCH #2008034005). The USFS revised the Mill City Fuels Reduction Project NEPA Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment in preparation of an Initial Study and Negative Declaration, pursuant to CEQA, and submitted it to the State Clearinghouse on behalf of SNC for a 30-day review period, which closed on April 16, 2008. USFS received one comment letter from the California Department of Fish and Game for which a response was prepared. Per letter from the State Clearinghouse dated April 17, 2008, SNC and USFS complied with the review requirements for environmental documents, pursuant to CEQA.

The CEQA Initial Study and Negative Declaration and NEPA Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment are on file at the following locations:

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

*Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Initial Study and Negative Declaration
Mill City Fuels Reduction Project*

Inyo National Forest
Mammoth Ranger Station
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Findings:

An Initial Study has been prepared by USFS, Inyo National Forest, on behalf of SNC, the CEQA lead agency, to assess the proposed project's potential effects on the environment and the significance of those effects. Based on the Initial Study, it has been determined that the proposed project would not have any significant effects on the environment and no mitigation measures are necessary. This conclusion is supported by the following findings:

- The proposed project would not have a significant impact related to aesthetics, agricultural resources, cultural resources, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, and utilities and service systems.
- The proposed project would have a less-than-significant impact related to air quality, biological resources, geology and soils, noise, and transportation and traffic.

Copies of the Mill City Fuels Reduction Project Initial Study and Negative Declaration, letter from the State Clearinghouse documenting completion of the CEQA public comment period, and comments and responses to comments on the Initial Study and Negative Declaration, as well as the NEPA Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment, are attached. Questions or comments regarding this Negative Declaration may be addressed to:

Bob Kingman, Program Manager
Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603
(530) 823-4678 (office)

Approval of Initial Study/Negative Declaration:

Certification by Those Responsible for Preparation of this Document. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy, in partnership with the US Forest Service, Inyo National Forest, has been responsible for the preparation of this Initial Study and Negative Declaration. I believe this document meets the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, is an accurate description of the proposed project, and that the lead agency has the means and commitment to implement the project design that will assure the project does not have any significant adverse effects on the environment. Based on review of the whole record for the Mills City Fuels Reduction Project, I recommend approval of this document.

Jim Branham
Executive Officer
Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Date

Approval of the Project by the Lead Agency. Pursuant to Section 21082.1 of the California Environmental Quality Act, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, has independently reviewed and analyzed the Initial Study and Negative Declaration, comments received on the Negative Declaration, and the NEPA Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment for the Mills City Fuels Reduction Project and finds that the Initial Study and Negative Declaration reflect the independent judgment of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. The lead agency further finds that the project will not result in significant impacts or potentially significant impacts that require mitigation measures.

I hereby approve this project:

Jim Branham
Executive Officer
Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Date